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## REMINISCENCES OF THE HON. EDWIN M. STANTON, SECRETARY OF WAR.

By ALBERT E. H. JOHNSON.\*

(Read before the Society, March 9, 1909, by Mr. Guy H. Johnson.)

Edwin McMasters Stanton enlisted for war against the great rebellion in the Supreme Court of the United States, in January, 1861, when the Southern States and Washington were ablaze with secession. He was then engaged in the celebrated Myra Clark Gaines case, and on that occasion he made the first declaration of patriotism concerning the approaching war heard in that court. The incident occurred in the suggestion of Mr. Stanton to the court that he looked for action in that case the following summer. "That will be impossible," said the opposing distinguished counsel, Caleb Cushing, "because this court will not then be in existence." At this the justices stared at each other in amazement and Mr. Stanton springing to his feet, and, glaring at Mr. Cushing, exclaimed: "This court and this nation will endure until long after all knowledge of those now in this august presence shall have passed into oblivion."

The court was in politics Democratic—Mr. Cushing was a Democrat—the Senate was Democratic, the

\* Albert E. H. Johnson was confidential secretary to the Secretary of War during the entire period of Mr. Stanton's incumbency; and for faithful and meritorious performance of his duty was appointed Major and Assistant Adjutant General of Volunteers just as the war was closing.

Major Johnson died May 12, 1909, shortly after the reading of the foregoing paper to the Society. He was born in Washington in the year 1827 and had lived there his whole life.

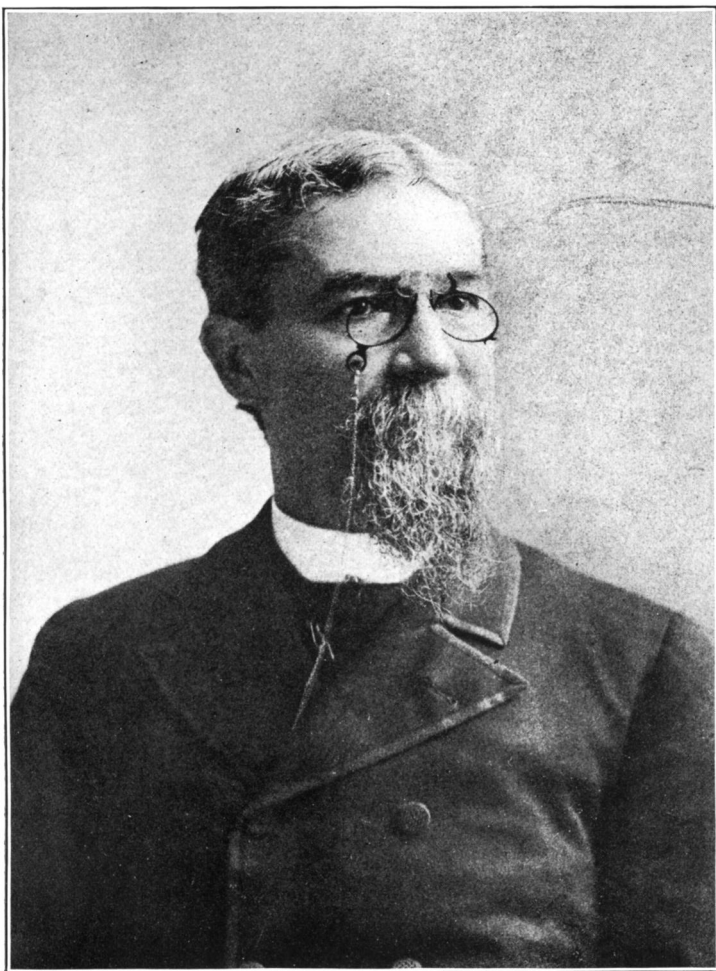
President was a Democrat, members of his cabinet were traitors and the nation trembled in the background.

From that moment Mr. Stanton, a distinguished lawyer and a Democrat, became the hope of the nation. As Attorney General in the cabinet of President Buchanan, confronting the treason of the members of that cabinet, he told the President that he was sleeping on a volcano in entertaining the plea of the rebel commissioners that the possession of its own property, Fort Sumter, by the government, was deemed a menace to the State of South Carolina; that the ground was mined all round and under him, ready to explode, and, without prompt and energetic action, he would be the last President of the United States.

In a single night Mr. Stanton broke the conspiracy in the cabinet that was disrupting the Union and the office of Attorney General then held by him became the rock against which the rebellion dashed.

As a member of President Buchanan's cabinet and watching the doings of the rebel commissioners from South Carolina and the traitorous cabinet members, he was at the same time in communication with the Republican leaders in Congress, and especially Mr. Seward, to whom Mr. Stanton disclosed the acts of the cabinet conspirators, and made suggestions to defeat their plans. For this he has been denounced as a spy and dishonorable in the highest degree, but President Lincoln deemed it patriotism of the purest character when he afterward offered him the War Department.

South Carolina passed the ordinance of secession the same day that Mr. Stanton became a member of President Buchanan's cabinet; and the first act of Mr. Stanton's coming power, was to stop the shipment of cannon, from the arsenal at Pittsburg, to forts in the



ALBERT E. H. JOHNSON

(1827-1909)

(From photo by C. M. Bell, Washington, D. C.)

South, ordered by Secretary of War Floyd, who had been sending all kinds of war material to the South in preparation for war against his own government.

This was the result of the first act of Mr. Stanton as a "spy." The city of Pittsburg voted him its thanks for the first glimmer of patriotism in the cabinet of President Buchanan.

After Lincoln became President Mr. Stanton had denounced him and his cabinet in their apparent do-nothing policy to meet the approaching war, but in such denunciation he became a mighty factor in molding union sentiment in Washington, which, at that time, was crazy wild with whisky and secession, while the South was like a prairie on fire, the North looking on in amazement and wonder, waiting on Lincoln until it seemed that all the nation was crazy. Then it was that Stanton said: "I can never consent to the dissolution of the Union. The Capital is in danger and must be defended at all hazards."

In a little while the curtain was raised and the North came forth roaring as a lion ready for battle. The shells delivered at the flag on Fort Sumter had lifted the curtain and the actors of the South saw the power of the North.

Nine months later, in January, 1862, President Lincoln called this giant patriot into his cabinet saying that "he wanted him not for his politics, but for his patriotism and power." To Mr. Seward, referring to the President's offer, Mr. Stanton said: "Tell the President I will accept, if no other pledge than to throttle treason shall be exacted"; and the President, when cautioned that Stanton would run away with the whole concern and that he would find that he could do nothing with such a man unless he let him have his own way, said: "I might have to put bricks in his pockets, but if

I do it would be better than bricks in his hat." Mr. Stanton did run away with the War Department and at full speed in giving the nation an army of more than a million men.

Stanton gave new life to the War Department; he gave new life to Congress; he gave new life to the North; he gave new life to the war, and he was a living and constant inspiration to President Lincoln; he gave new life to the Navy; he gave new life to the loyal governors; he gave new life to the nation's capital; he gave new life to the loyal people; and he gave new life in the cabinet room. But in that new life he did not cultivate sweetness of temper, nor amiability of character, but rather a character of stern activity having only in view the monster "traitor" slashing at the throat of the nation and a determination to grapple with that monster.

When Mr. Stanton became Secretary, the army was in winter quarters and no fighting in sight or proposed; the city was alive with officers having a good time; and one of the first acts of Mr. Stanton's tyranny was to order these officers to their regiments where they could learn something of war.

His next act was creating the Central Telegraph Office in rooms adjoining his own, and directing that all war telegrams should go through this office, and copies be furnished him. The originals sent and received by the President, the Secretary and various officers I kept in separate volumes, making hundreds of volumes of five hundred pages each. These books are now kept as sacred records in the War Department and tell the history of the mighty rebellion, a great undertaking never before done in the history of war.

It was Mr. Stanton's design to preserve a complete telegraphic record of the war and in this work he

proved himself first among all the men who ever held a like position at any time, in any country. Carbon copies on yellow tissue paper were handed Mr. Stanton direct from the telegraph office and these copies I kept in spring clips such as were then used as clothesline pins, and marked them for each day in the week and Sunday. They were kept on his desk and at the end of each week I took them from the clips to be replaced by others.

This way of keeping the record of all telegrams was for Mr. Stanton's own information, but he also ordered that the originals of all telegrams sent from commanding generals, or from any officer with the armies or in the field, be sent to the War Department by the telegraphers who wired them. To this General Grant later objected and Mr. Stanton then made an order that the original of any telegram which should be withheld by the writer should not be paid for by the government until the original as a voucher was filed in the War Department.

Soon after he became Secretary, one morning, on his way from his home on K Street between Thirteenth and Fourteenth streets, to the War Department, Mr. Stanton stopped to see General McClellan, then commanding all the armies, and whose headquarters were at the corner of the Belasco Theatre Square, where McClellan kept him waiting for an audience, and the Secretary said: "That will be the last time General McClellan will give either myself or the President the waiting snub." In a few days Mr. Stanton ordered the telegraph to be removed from McClellan's headquarters to the War Department, at the same time detaching from his staff his chief operator, then Captain Eckert, who afterwards became president of the Western Union Telegraph Company. In doing this

McClellan complained that Stanton had taken his dispatches, which was not true, but he left the imprint of his coming power.

When Mr. Stanton centered the telegraph office in the War Department it was to control the military news and have it censored, and to prevent it from reaching the enemy, or the press; and he became the only reliable reporter the press had. So perfect was the system that he could talk to the commanders of all the armies throughout the entire battle front from the Potomac to the Rio Grande, and in this particular the telegraph office became very attractive to President Lincoln where he could be comfortable, undisturbed and read the telegrams as they were received. In this way the President could pass from the telegraph office into Mr. Stanton's room and answer any telegram he wished to consult him about and on many occasions Mr. Stanton inspired the answers made by the President.

The safety of this telegraphic record was of great concern to Mr. Stanton and in his conflict with President Johnson for possession of the War Department, Mr. Stanton directed me to get a wagon after office hours and have the boxes in which I kept the volumes under lock, taken to the theatre in which President Lincoln was assassinated and then occupied by the Surgeon General, and store them in the vault and keep the key. Mr. Stanton had then resigned and with his permission, I turned the key over to the Adjutant General with the information of the place of keeping of the telegrams.

The history of the rebellion comprises one hundred and twenty-eight books entitled "War of the Rebellion, Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies," but in all the official reports, correspondence, and telegrams of the Union leaders, the enemy was never re-



ferred to as the "Confederates," but always as "Rebels."

Mr. Stanton never spoke or wrote of those at war against the government, but as rebels and traitors. This is shown when he had been Secretary only a few months in answer to a resolution of Congress in which he said "all will recognize the paramount duty of guarding against any recognition of the enemy otherwise than as rebels and traitors in arms against the government."

When the Federal troops entered Richmond, one of the first orders Mr. Stanton gave was to seize the offices of the rebel government and to secure and send to the department all the papers relating to the rebellion however unintelligible or insignificant, even those bearing the likeness of a cipher, as he had the key that would decipher.

Mr. Stanton's anxiety for the safety of the Richmond War Records arose from the fact that the cipher "key" found on the body of Booth the assassin was identical with that found in the office of the rebel Secretary of State immediately after the fall of Richmond, and Mr. Stanton wanted to connect Jefferson Davis and the four rebel agents in Canada with the assassination of President Lincoln.

Over ninety large boxes of documents of the rebel government were shipped to the War Department, early in May, 1865, and but for collecting and saving the large mass of public papers under Stanton's orders, they would have been destroyed or hopelessly scattered. As it was, a great many that had escaped the conflagration, had been plundered and carried off by relic hunters. Later eighty-one boxes were sent to the War Department, weighing ten tons. Papers were strewn

all over the streets when the Federal forces entered Richmond.

Assistant Secretary Watson left the department some time before the close of the war, and in October, 1866, Mr. Stanton sent me to him at his home in Ash-tabula, Ohio, to offer him a position in the department for collecting the archives and preparing a history of the war including his telegraphic history and the Confederate records. Mr. Watson declined, but it resulted finally in the publication of the most extensive war records in the world and of which the mighty secretary was the promoter. His telegraphic record was his only vanity, and well it might be, for no other organizer of armies in all the world ever made such a record.

In the War Department Mr. Stanton's life was one endless round of impatience produced from various causes. The Army of the Potomac was his idol and there never was a time when it did not outnumber Lee's Army; never was an army more completely equipped for war, and the advance of that army for battle was constantly hoped for. It never advanced aggressively for battle under McClellan in the sense that under Grant its battles were always aggressive. The presence in the cabinet of Mr. Blair, a supporter of General McClellan, was another source of constant irritation to Stanton. The disastrous defeats of that army; the constant exposure of the capital to capture by Lee; the dangerous opposition to the war in the loyal states, and especially that of Governor Seymour of New York; the abuse by Greeley, the editor of the New York *Tribune*, all kept him in a condition of a candle burning at both ends. Never was a minister so torn and tormented in his struggles for successful war. His duties in the reception room were largely distasteful, more particularly because of his quickness and often rough manner.

He created what the nation required—the army to save it, and in this he made an army of enemies, among them every rebel and traitor, every disappointed applicant for office or promotion, every deserter, every copperhead, every grafter, and every patriot who wanted to save the constitution at the expense of the Union; for every man who was not actively for the Union was an enemy in Stanton's eyes.

To few public men in her history does the United States owe more for services that will count through the ages, than it does to Secretary Stanton, for he was the man in power during the war, that, in the estimation of the North at the time, was a guarantee of national security in time of peril. He was the bulwark of confidence to the loyal North and to the Republican party, because every one knew he was intensely for war to save the Union; courageous in denouncing treason, and because all knew his love of country was greater than his love of party. He was the only official of his time that blended wisdom with tyranny, and his intuition was most acute.

No man could be personally popular in dealing heroically with the problems of war, its demands and its miseries, but as the god of war he was mighty and no student of the history of that war can fail to see that he was the controlling power that gave the nation a saving army.

Judge Kelley, member of Congress from Pennsylvania, often called to talk with Mr. Stanton, and in one of these visits he asked the Secretary if he was within the law in organizing a fleet of gunboats to open the Mississippi, to which Mr. Stanton answered, "The law and the authority of the Navy Department does not give me any concern. As the Navy Department does not act and declines to coöperate with the War Depart-

ment, I have no hesitation in creating a War Department Navy." It proved a success. These gunboats took a most important part in opening the Mississippi.

On one occasion Senator Wilson told Mr. Stanton that he seemed to delight in acting with presidential powers, or as Commander of the Army, and as Secretary of the Navy in the capture of Norfolk, and in the destruction of the "Merrimac," to which Mr. Stanton said that he had been trying for some time to get General McClellan to take Norfolk, but he did nothing; that the Navy Department also refused to make such a movement; and that at night he conceived the plan of taking the President with him to Fortress Monroe and make things move by giving orders to Commodore Goldsborough and to General Wool. The result was the capture of Norfolk, the destruction of the "Merrimac," and the opening of the James to Richmond. For these great achievements General McClellan sent Mr. Stanton congratulations, but Mr. Welles, the Secretary of the Navy, took no notice of Stanton's usurpation of the powers of the Navy Department.

When Mr. Stanton arrived on Commodore Goldsborough's flag ship he went to work at once, for he knew what he went there for, and having given orders he sent a telegram to Assistant Secretary Watson that "things are moving now," and when he returned he told Mr. Watson that nothing would have moved so long as the "Merrimac" was there, and that Goldsborough was too old and pompous to fight his ships.

I never knew Mr. Stanton to look for a paper among those on his desk, but would ask me for the letter or papers or telegrams he wanted. These letters and papers I kept in open boxes unfolded and I could at once put my hand upon the letter or paper or telegram he wanted. He rarely answered any personal letters.

His writing was confined to telegrams and in which he seemed to take personal pleasure.

He wore common steel frame eye glasses and for all large writing such as telegrams and endorsements of papers and especially in the reception room he used them, but in writing letters he removed the glasses and wrote neat and small with his head lowered, being near sighted.

Mr. Stanton wore a silk hat; he had no watch. He never carried any money; he did his own marketing and got the money from me, as I drew his salary for him. Twice a week William Dupee, a messenger, and still in that capacity in the War Department, shaved him in his office, shaving the upper lip only. This was not graft, for it was saving valuable time, as Mr. Stanton necessarily gave every minute of his day and night for the government. He never took a vacation. To him the grafter was worse than the traitor. The nearest to graft that I ever knew him to sanction was in calling upon and accepting the professional services of Surgeon General Barnes, who was his family physician; and the only thing of value I ever knew him to take from the government, without paying for it, was medicine for himself and his family on the prescription of Dr. Barnes.

While President Lincoln in everything he did or said was to one purpose, the exercise of power within the scope of the constitution, Mr. Stanton was for saving the Union whether the constitution was saved or not, since war with him could brook no hampering or limiting bounds, and as he said, to save the constitution at the expense of the Union, would only result in destroying both.

Lincoln, after years of achievement, character, nobility, of courage, of kindness, years of expressionless

sorrow and the reward martyrdom, a man who won the admiration of the angels, crowned with the world's applause, was sensible in the majesty of these combined attributes and showed that he had the wisdom to tolerate his war secretary, whose attributes were tyrannical, dominating, imperious, impetuous, great in will power, bending men by his masterful passion to his own purpose, in energy sleepless; Stanton, with his faults, impatient, cold, harsh, tyrannical, antagonistic and severe in judgment loomed proudly among the important men of his day in his exercise of power, and in carrying aloft the jewel of patriotism.

For an hour's rest he would often lock himself in his room, and lying upon a sofa read the English magazines, particularly Littell's *Living Age*. All these magazines were partizans of the South and it was for this reason that he read them, for he wanted to know the views England took of the rebellion. Without an exception the predictions therein were that the Union would not be preserved; that the peace of Europe would be safer with the Union divided into two or three or even more republics on the North American continent.

A prophecy by Bulwer Lytton that soon there would be "not two but four separate and sovereign commonwealths arising out of the United States which would have their separate presidents and each carry its merchandise under a separate flag," particularly attracted his attention, and he spoke of it in connection with Lee as the most dangerous enemy of the United States.

For interfering with General McClellan, as commander of the Army of the Potomac, Mr. Stanton was denounced and held responsible by the Democratic party for the defeats of that army. If there was any one thing during the war that Mr. Stanton feared it

was the capture of the nation's capital, and he was alert in all the movements of McClellan's Army to see that Washington was safe. In taking the army to the Peninsula McClellan did leave Washington without adequate protection, and a commission of army officers so declared, and Mr. Stanton saw that an adequate army was retained here for its safety.

When that army, after its defeat, was brought back from the Peninsula and again put in command of McClellan, in his movements to meet Lee at the battle of Antietam, General Halleck, then in command of Washington, found it necessary to caution McClellan that he was uncovering Washington, and finally McClellan answered that if the city should be captured he could retake it. Only think of the commander of that great army that had the sole care and protection of the nation's capital, treating the life of the nation with such unsoldierly contempt. Had Washington been captured by Lee there would not have been left much of the United States. In the Peninsula campaign McClellan wanted the troops which were held for the protection of Washington, and in the Maryland campaign he wanted the troops that were retained; and it is a fact that of all the commanders of that grand army McClellan was the only one who denounced and hated the whole "crew" ruling at Washington; and if ever a war minister was right in interfering with and watching the commanding generals of his armies it was in the case of General McClellan.

In his Peninsula defeat he sent a telegram to Mr. Stanton giving details of his defeat and stating that he was not responsible and said: "You have done your best to sacrifice this army." He no doubt thought that this malicious charge against Mr. Stanton would

produce a great commotion in the country and be sustained by his party that had declared the war a failure. But he was disappointed in his wish and hope in the effect of this charge, because it was suppressed by the telegraph censor of the War Department, who said the statement was false and that General McClellan could not use him to gratify his malice against Mr. Stanton. The telegram was mutilated by the censor, General Sanford, and was re-copied, eliminating the charge, and handed to Mr. Stanton, who I think never knew of this mutilation.

Several days after this, General Marcey, father-in-law of McClellan and his chief-of-staff, came direct from McClellan with a startling ultimatum that unless his army was strongly reinforced at once, he would have to surrender to Lee. Mr. Stanton was so stunned that he only answered that "reinforcements had been ordered from the west, and that everything would be done to save the army." McClellan's threat had left its sting and the fear of the loss of the capital had determined Mr. Stanton and General Halleck to bring that army back to Washington. The problem was to get it here before Lee could get this, and Mr. Stanton spent nearly two months of dread in the War Department and brooded over the impending danger to the national capital, which Lee could have easily taken after his defeat of Pope's army, if he had known the conditions.

During the Peninsula campaign, the army left for the protection of the capital was divided and under separate commanders and the rebel General Jackson defeated them piecemeal. These defeats were laid on Mr. Stanton by General McClellan and his partisans and their charges were keenly felt by him although he knew them to be false.



When Early came near entering Washington at Fort Stevens President Lincoln went out there and witnessed the battle, and I have read that Secretary Stanton was also there, but he was not. On the contrary, when he found that Lincoln had been there and in a position as a mark for the rebel sharpshooters Mr. Stanton said: "He seems to have lost all sense of his duty to the nation in placing himself as a target for the enemy and especially at a time of the greatest danger to the city and when preparations had been made for his flight in the event of its capture."

On that occasion Mr. Stanton was really apprehending the capture of the city and was walking his office in dread while Early, having defeated Wallace at the Monocacy, was marching upon the defenceless city, which for the first time during the war was entirely without defenders, and all because neither Mr. Stanton nor the President wished to interfere with General Grant's plans.

At this crisis the Secretary made a great mistake in not interfering with General Grant, and while himself sensible of the danger he never sent a telegram to Grant about it. He did not want to raise the old McClellan cry of interference; and it is a most singular fact that Grant himself admitted that by his delay in sending troops Early came very near getting into the city.

Weary of the disasters that pursued the army under Generals McClellan, Pope and Burnside, and longing for a commander that would lead and fight that great army to victory, Mr. Stanton saw that victorious commander with the western army, and he summoned General Grant to Washington to receive his commission as lieutenant general. After the ceremony was over at the White House, General Grant, at the request of Mr. Stanton, went at once to the War Department.

On the day Grant left the West for Washington he wrote Sherman that he would return to his command in ten or twelve days; and in his "Memoirs" he states that it was his intention before coming to Washington to remain in the West, but found it impossible to resist the pressure brought to bear upon him, to adhere to his own plans. That pressure was Stanton's deliverance to Grant in his call at the War Department. Grant came in soon after Mr. Stanton's return from the White House, and without a word from Grant when he came Stanton said that he had hurried him to Washington because the President and himself had felt the need of his presence with the Army of the Potomac on which the government was then depending with seeming little hope of a change from merely fighting battles with Lee; that Lee's army was a constant source of anxiety; that several times the army had narrowly escaped destruction; that he looked upon Lee as the greatest power of the South; that there was not a day that he felt entirely safe from raids from Lee's army; that while the Army of the Potomac had fought many bloody battles, it had gained nothing beyond saving the government; that so long as Lee had an army he would be the power of the rebellion; that the chief army of the government had been fighting defensively from the beginning almost on the same ground; and that it was an imperative necessity that Lee should be fought constantly and aggressively. He said Washington was then as it had always been, the center of the war and he wanted him to see for himself the necessity of having his headquarters with the Army of the Potomac and that he would use all the power of the nation to give him the men to crush Lee.

The impressively earnest manner of Mr. Stanton and the profoundly thoughtful manner of Grant was the beginning of the end of the war and was all the result

of the great brain of Stanton who had become almost exhausted of his hope in the success of his mightiest army. The only answer Grant made was that he "would go to Meade in the morning and would immediately return, go west and put the armies under commanders and come back." The next morning Senator Wilson came and to a question if Grant intended to fight Meade's army, Mr. Stanton said "Yes," and that when the fighting again commenced it would be kept up until the end. After his first battle with Lee, who had for years defied the greatest army in the world, Stanton said: "Grant has come to stay."

While the commission presentation ceremonies were taking place at the White House, Sherman, from the West, wrote to Grant: "Don't stay in Washington. Come west; here lies the seat of the coming empire. For God's sake and for the country's sake, come out of Washington. It is the center of intrigue." Yet Sherman knew that the Army of the Potomac wanted a fighting leader and had it not got Grant, Sherman's empire of the West would have been a fiction. Stanton's magnificent and mighty army had for the first time a mighty leader, who at the end said of it "that it was as good an army as ever fought a battle."

The Army of the Potomac gave the Secretary more concern and made him more fretful than anything else while it was commanded by McClellan, but under Grant as its commander, Stanton became a different person. With Grant's persistent fighting Stanton had lost his fretfulness and impatience. But when in May, 1864, after General Grant had been fighting Lee for eight days, he sent a telegram to General Halleck that there had been "five days rain, and that all offensive operations must cease until twenty-four hours of dry weather and to assure the Secretary of War that the elements

alone have suspended hostilities," Mr. Stanton speaking of this telegram to persons in his room said: "In all the telegrams from McClellan he never sent one ringing with eagerness to fight like this." That is what he knew he would get when he told Grant the Army of the Potomac was waiting for him.

Mr. Stanton knew that forty thousand union prisoners were dying of the horrors, exposure, suffering, murder and starvation, and at an appalling rate at Andersonville, at Salisbury, at Libby Prison, and at Belle Isle; and he bore in silence and torture the charge and fierce denunciations hurled at him by the northern press as a brute for stopping the exchange of prisoners, when in fact it was General Grant who protested against the exchange, giving as a reason that to liberate forty thousand strong, healthy and well-clothed rebels would only be to return them to the ranks to battle against himself and Sherman, their paroles not being respected at Richmond; while from our returned prisoners scarcely a single man was fit for fighting, all being skeletons, sick and feeble. Forty thousand patriots must starve and die in torture in the rebel prisons, as no sea of blood, no waste of treasure, no suffering of prisoners could stand in the way of crushing the rebellion.

Stanton's broad shoulders bore the scorching lash of public condemnation of his supposed brutal conduct toward those forty thousand slowly tortured prisoners; while General Grant with equal silence never took the public in his confidence to explain that the forty thousand rebel prisoners, which he captured and paroled at Vicksburg and the fifteen thousand captured by Banks at Port Hudson and paroled, were again forced into the rebel army; and thereby to make light the

heart of Mr. Stanton, the one man on whom the loyal North leaned to save the Union.

In the reception room representatives and senators came with complaints or requests from their constituents serving in the army or lying in the hospitals and the Secretary hearing what each had to say would in cases of merit take a long white official envelope on which he would write the name of the applicant and the order in the case. He had nothing on his desk but these envelopes and pen and ink; and an attending orderly stood near to take his orders. When he entered President Lincoln's cabinet he was in the prime of life, when he left President Johnson's cabinet he was a wreck, not so much the result of his ceaseless energy in the storm period of the war, as from his ceaseless watching of the doings at the White House under President Johnson.

In the reception room Mr. Stanton showed his knowledge of the laws which bore upon matters presented to him; and his instant grasp of a situation after a few words of explanation.

Representative Thad. Stevens of Pennsylvania wanted a certain thing done, when Mr. Stanton quickly said: "The law makes no provision for it," to which Mr. Stevens, hesitating as if hurt, said he would look at the law.

A committee of residents opposed to the war, and then known in politics as copperheads, came into the reception room in behalf of Mrs. Surratt sentenced to be hanged for the assassination of President Lincoln, and among them the Secretary noted an officer of the army wearing a surgeon's uniform, and this so aroused his anger that, looking at the surgeon he said: "You had better take off those epaulets; they are not an honor to you on this occasion." The spokesman of the

committee stated that they had come on a mission of mercy on behalf of Mrs. Surratt, to which Mr. Stanton answered that he could do nothing, that the President was the power in such matters.

In a matter Senator Trumbull was presenting to the Secretary the two became excited and by accidental movement of the Senator's trembling hand in removing papers from the high table, he knocked the ink stand off, ruining a new green carpet. This incident ended the business and Mr. Stanton went at once to his room. He afterwards sent an apology to the Senator, but the latter never again came to see the Secretary.

Before the victory of General Thomas at the great battle of Nashville, it was a source of much concern to Stanton, Halleck and Grant, that Thomas would not move after repeated orders to do so, and for which one of his excuses was that he was waiting until Wilson was ready with his cavalry, when Mr. Stanton in a telegram to Grant said: "If Thomas waits for Wilson, Gabriel will blow his last horn."

General Stoneman had a large cavalry command but had not been very satisfactory to the Secretary in his achievements with his force. The Secretary called him to the department for a talk. His face was thin and he looked as if he needed rest, and sleep and medicine.

While sitting in the Secretary's communicating room waiting to see him he fell to the floor in a faint, and Surgeon General Barnes who was also waiting, laid him on the floor and bathed his face. Mr. Stanton came and told him to go and take some rest and General Barnes would attend him. If Mr. Stanton had intended any harsh arraignment of the General, he was softened by the fainting and said that he would see him when he was better.

In the War Department Mr. Stanton was omnipotent.

He was the autocrat of the nation and the people and the army knew, felt and approved it; and in the midst of all sorts of lying, persistent and ignorant denunciation from all sorts and kinds of enemies, he said: "There can be no greater madness for a man to encounter what I do for anything else than motives that overlap time and look forward to eternity."

In characterizing Mr. Stanton as a tyrant I do not mean that he was a tyrant in the sense that Nero was in playing the fiddle while Rome was burning, but like Alexander, who caused the destruction by fire of the great city of Moscow to effect the destruction of Napoleon's army which was marching for its capture.

Stanton's tyranny aimed to destroy every power and defeat every purpose, and oppose anything which, as he saw it, would disrupt the union, or reconstruct it upon a basis that would be cause of endless trouble in dealing with the people who wanted to secede from the union.

It was his genius that kept the vast army in condition for battle and that rescued the nation from a rebellion the most gigantic and the most atrocious since the fall of the angels.

Mr. Stanton was a new figure in history and of all the administrations of all the presidents, history presents no example of an entire administration more completely dominated by one cabinet member. It was war time. That Stanton dominated everything is fully proved by the hostility of every member of the cabinet—except Mr. Chase; and there is proof all along the line in the War Department to sustain Lincoln in what he said that Stanton was "running the machine." Who else was running it and what would Lincoln or any of the other members of his cabinet have amounted to if the war office had failed. There were many things Mr.

Stanton did, as the stoker, the engineer, and the very fuel of the administration, that the cabinet knew was reason for his dismissal, yet not one would have dared to have deposed him. Lincoln knew all the tyranny of Mr. Stanton, but even he would not have dared to dismiss him, nor was there any time that he even winked in that direction. Lincoln wanted to be president of a saved country, and the human battleax in the old wooden war office, that never for a moment ceased cleaving at the rebellion, was the very instrumentality that he wanted there; and he relied on his cleaving power, and even declined to accept Mr. Stanton's resignation when Lee surrendered. Stanton represented the policy which saved the union in the cabinets of three presidents and he was the executive arm that Congress wanted to prevent being overthrown by the third President. If there is anything that the history of the war period shows, it is that Stanton was the colossus of the period.

For maintaining the discipline of the army Mr. Stanton seemed to be master of every law; with him the war for the preservation of the United States was sacred and above all law and above the constitution on which the government was founded. Personal rights and justice were as nothing to him in his efforts to use the might and power of the nation for crushing the great rebellion. With him the rebellion was a giant of mighty power and no one had a right to invoke the constitution or the laws of the United States to add power to that rebellion, and to deny the right of the government and the nation for self preservation. In his love of country he characterized the leaders of the rebellion as "traitors" engaged in war for the destruction of the United States. If he was wrong in this then Lincoln, the ruler of men and the saviour of his country, was



wrong when, in writing of his efforts by war, to save the country from ruin said of the most powerful leaders then in arms to destroy the United States, that General Robert E. Lee, General Joseph E. Johnston, General John C. Breckenridge, General John B. Magruder, General Simon B. Buckner, General William B. Preston and Commodore Franklin Buchanan, then occupying the very highest places in the rebel war service, were all serving the United States before the rebellion began, and were nearly as well known to be traitors then as now.

Stanton in all his writings and speeches called those engaged in war against the United States "rebels" and "traitors" and never "Confederates," nor can it be found in all the writings and speeches of that marvel of greatness, Lincoln, that he ever used any other word for those in rebellion than "rebels" and "traitors" and "insurgents." This is the language of Grant, and yet Stanton is the only person on whom abuse and hatred are heaped for calling things by their proper names.

He was quick to promote for bravery without waiting the usual recommendation of superior officers as he did on his way back from Savannah (where he went by sea to see General Sherman) and reaching Fort Fisher soon after its capture promoted every officer whom he found had displayed conspicuous gallantry in its capture

General Schenck left Congress to enter the army and fell wounded at the head of his troops at the second Bull Run and lay sick at Willard's Hotel. Mr. Stanton sent him by me an appointment as major general with a letter expressing the pleasure it gave him in making the promotion as a just tribute to his ability and patriotism to his country. All such promotions were

in the volunteer service and he only wanted the proof of such patriotism, which he said to Senator Wilson, then chairman of the Military Committee of the Senate, was supposed to be lost at West Point.

Except in the appointment of Mr. Wolcott, his brother-in-law, as Assistant Secretary of War, Mr. Stanton did not appoint a relative to office. His son coming from Kenyon College without money acted for a time without pay as clerk to Assistant Secretary Eckert and was finally given an appointment by him.

I knew all Mr. Stanton's immediate compatriots of that time, and since have read of some of them, but no man in all the broad land at that time was his equal in executive power and in vigilance; none more preëminent in the field of statesmanship; and as a war organizer, history does not record his equal in dealing with the problems of war on a battlefield of three thousand miles in extent, and in the dangers of peace. In the dark hours he was the anchor which held fast the destiny of the republic. Stanton was the lawgiver in the cabinets of Buchanan, Lincoln and Johnson, and it was only in the last cabinet that his legal brain made him unwelcome, because his voice was for the conqueror in the war and for Congress as the representative of the conqueror as against President Johnson who turned against both on the great problems of reconstruction.

Grant very seldom came to see Mr. Stanton after the close of the war and Mr. Stanton would sometimes send Madison, the colored messenger, for him saying: "Go tell General Grant to come over here"—the headquarters of the army being across the street. This not very polite message to the man to whom the nation was then paying homage, became known to Grant's staff and all the members disliked Mr. Stanton, and particu-

larly General Badeau, who was the most prominent of the staff.

Mr. Stanton has sent me with a similar message to Secretaries Seward and Chase, and while I delivered a polite request I could see slight indication that they did not like it, but never was there any hesitation in coming.

In all this roughness there was not the least disrespect meant, for very much in the same way Mr. Stanton summoned President Lincoln at night from Soldiers' Home, to a cabinet meeting in the War Department to determine the sending of troops from the Army of the Potomac then on the Rapidan in Virginia, to save the Army of the West after the defeat of General Rosecrans. In this crisis Mr. Stanton played a mighty part and showed in him intense patriotism and power which commanded the admiration of the loyal people of the Nation.

It is related of the President that when an officer told him that he had acted in an emergency without the President's orders, but under the advice of the Secretary of War, Mr. Lincoln shook him cordially by the hand and said: "Hereafter, Major, when you have Mr. Stanton's sanction in any matter, you have mine, for so great is my confidence in his judgment and patriotism, that I never wish to take an important step myself without first consulting him."

The telegraph office and the rooms of the Secretary were communicating and Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Stanton often met in the telegraph office. Lincoln loved the company of General Eckert and his three cipher operators and they tell interesting incidents which show the relation of these two great opposite characters. On one occasion Mr. Stanton on entering the room was addressed by the President as "Mars," of which, as a

playful allusion to his official capacity, he took no notice.

On another occasion Lincoln himself told Mr. Stanton how a man to whom he gave a card to the Secretary presenting it to him with the story of his great loss in cotton by Mr. Stanton's orders forbidding buying up cotton in the border states for raising money for the South, and coming back to him, "Mr. President," said he, "what do you think Stanton did with your card?" "I don't know," said Lincoln, "Tell me." "He tore it up and threw it in the waste basket. He is not a fit man to be your Secretary of War."

"Did he do that," replied Lincoln; "well that is just like Stanton."

The President gave Mr. Stanton an account of this incident with much enjoyment and without the slightest show of taking exception to Stanton's treatment of his introduction card, and it shows the opposite character of these two great men the one, Lincoln, having a heart greater than his head—the other, Stanton, having a head greater than his heart.

In these incidents of the dominating character of these two great men it must not be understood that Stanton carried his sternness beyond a sense of duty. It was war, and to him kindness and tenderness would not help the army in battle, yet Stanton often seized occasion to soften the miseries of war.

It was only in the cabinet of Lincoln where Stanton commanded the homage of the President; yet in that cabinet he was both feared and disliked by reason of his aggressive and towering conduct toward and over all around him. In his gift to the nation of the million army, Stanton was the rock on which the new nation builded and which he almost alone held in place by his mighty grasp. For over three years of peril when the

artillery of Lee thundered almost in hearing of the White House, Stanton carried the government on his broad shoulders.

The particular phase of the domination which Mr. Stanton exercised over President Lincoln is best illustrated in the incident which caused Mr. Stanton to revoke Mr. Lincoln's permit for the assembling of the Virginia Legislature after the fall of Richmond. This incident resulted from a serious conference between Mr. Stanton and the President in the Secretary's room on the afternoon of April 12, 1865, about the permit the President had given Judge Campbell, through General Weitzel in command at Richmond, and which Judge Campbell, a member of that legislature, understood to be for the assembling of the rightful legislature of the state to settle all differences with the United States, and to withdraw the Virginia troops from resistance to the general government. In return for such permit the President promised a specific equivalent, to wit, a remission to the people of the rebel states, except in certain cases, of the confiscation of their property.

The President, after Stanton's explanation, seeing his mistake wrote a telegram to General Weitzel explaining that he had given no permit for the assembling "of the rightful legislature" and to withdraw his letter and the paper he gave Judge Campbell, or to countermand them.

Having written the telegram he read it to Mr. Stanton, who saying it was not sufficient clinched the whole matter and wiped out the power of that great state in the words which the President added to his telegram. "Do not allow them to assemble, but if any have come allow them safe return to their homes." This was the last telegram the President wrote in the War Department and on a subject of the last importance to the

nation; a subject that should have been discussed by the full cabinet, but which was determined by the master brain of Stanton in which the whole cabinet was not his peer; and the President yielded to the domination of Mr. Stanton. No other member of the cabinet could have dominated the President in a matter on which his heart was set—the placing of the State of Virginia in the Union. Great as the President was in this matter his War Secretary was greater; and so it was all along the lines of three cabinets on the greatest questions with which each wrestled he was the controlling power.

Mr. Stanton's view of the effect of the assembling of the Virginia Legislature was in perfect keeping with the conditions which President Lincoln delivered to the Peace Commissioners at Hampton Roads in February, 1865, when he told them that whether their states would be governed as independent territories, or permitted to have representation in Congress was one on which he could promise nothing but which would be decided by Congress after their submission had been accepted. These were the terms Mr. Stanton was fighting for in the Johnson cabinet and which it rejected—Secretary Seward voting to reject although he supported these terms with President Lincoln at Hampton Roads.

Two members of Congress wanted an army appointment for the son of a man who had befriended Lincoln, who endorsed the application with a request that the Secretary of War make the appointment. The paper was presented to Mr. Stanton with the remark that the President wished the appointment made. Mr. Stanton in refusing to make the appointment said: "I cannot comply with the President's wishes in this case." This refusal being communicated to the President he said: "Gentlemen, it is my duty to submit. I cannot add to

Mr. Stanton's troubles. His position is one of the most difficult. Thousands in the army blame him because they are not promoted and other thousands out of the army blame him because they are not appointed. The pressure upon him is immeasurable and unending. He is the rock on the beach of our national ocean against which the breakers dash and roar, dash and roar without ceasing. He fights back the angry waters and prevents them from undermining and overwhelming the land. Gentlemen, I do not see how he survives, why he is not crushed and torn to pieces. Without him I should be destroyed. He performs his task superhumanly. Now, do not mind this matter, for Mr. Stanton is right and I cannot wrongly interfere with him." Only think of such uplifting words from him whose fame in history surpasses every hero—military or civil of his time in the love and admiration of the nation. He who was the giant personality of his age, the statesman of his day; he who held the destiny of the nation in his hand.

Stern as the Secretary was he loved Lincoln, and in the last moment of that marvel of greatness and goodness Stanton bent over him in grief and sorrow, his head resting on his left hand, and as the soul of this now tenderest memory of the nation passed into eternity, said of him: "He now belongs to the ages."